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Going to Rome and plan to visit St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican?  
 The following information may be helpful.

If you can't find your answer here, send an e-mail to: [stpetersbasilica@gmail.com](mailto:stpetersbasilica@gmail.com)

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**Hours:** St. Peter's Basilica is open daily, Apr-Sep 7:00-19:00;  
 Oct-Mar 7:00-18:00

Treasury Museum: 9:00 - 18:30 (Apr - Sep) 9:00 - 17:30 p.m. (Oct - Mar)

Grottoes: 7:00-18:00 (Apr - Sep) 7:00-17:00 (Oct - Mar)

Cupola: 8:00 - 18:00 (Apr - Sep) 8:00 - 16:45 (Oct - Mar)

Scavi Office: weekdays 9:00 - 17:00

Sacristy (011) 39 06 6988 3712

Parish Office (011) 39 06 6988 5435

Vatican Switchboard (011) 39 06 6982

[Wheelchair Access](#)

### Getting to St. Peter's Basilica

By Subway - This map shows the Vatican area and nearest subway stop.  
 Take Linea A (red line) toward Battistini and exit at Ottaviano-S. Pietro.  
 Walk south on Via Ottaviano toward St. Peter's Square.

By Walking - From the city center, the most direct route is to cross the  
 Tiber and walk straight up Via Conciliazioni. A more interesting route is to  
 go under the Passetto arch near Castel S. Angelo and walk up Pio  
 Borgo, providing a more dramatic entrance from the right (north) side of  
 the Piazza.

### Getting to the Vatican Museum ([Vatican website](#))

If you're going directly to the Vatican Museum, you may not want to head to St. Peter's Square first.

By Subway - Take the Linea A (red line) toward Battistini and exit either at Ottaviano-S. Pietro or Cipro-Musei Vaticani. They're both about the same distance from the entrance, but I prefer Ottaviano. Follow your map and the Vatican Wall to the entrance.

From St. Peter's - Exit the Square to the north and simply walk along the Vatican Wall (10-15 min.)

### Vatican Museum & Sistine Chapel - ([Vatican website](#))

Hours - Closed on many holidays, check the [Vatican Website](#)

Mar-Oct 8:45-15:20, Exit 16:45 Saturdays 8:45 - 12:20 Exit 13:45

Nov-Feb 8:45 - 12:20, Exit 13:45

Closed Sundays, except the last Sunday of the month which is free.

Regular Price - 12 Euros ([Vatican Website](#))

For Guided Tours of the Vatican Gardens or Museum - [Vatican Website](#)

Many people still come to St. Peter's Square looking for the entrance to the Museum. The roof of the Sistine Chapel can be seen from the Square, but it's a 10-15 min. walk, north along the Vatican Wall, to the museum entrance. Modest dress is required (though more enforced at the Basilica).

I recommend going early (around 8:00AM), or late (after 11:00AM), as the line can get very long during tourist season..



Free map available at  
 Rome Information  
 Centers

[Vatican Area Map](#)  
 with bus stops

**Mass Schedule for St. Peter's** (Masses in Italian)**Daily**

8:30 - [Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament](#) followed by Eucharistic Adoration until the 16:45 Benediction

9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 17:00 - [Altar of St. Joseph](#) (Left Transept)

**Thursday**

9:00 - For Pilgrims at the [Altar of the Chair](#) (Cattedra)

**Sunday**

9:00 - For the Parish of St. Peters

10:30 - [Altar of the Chair](#) (in Latin)

11:30 - [Chapel of Blessed Sacrament](#)

12:15 - [Altar of the Chair](#)

13:00 - [Altar of St. Joseph](#)

16:00 - [Altar of the Chair](#)

17:00 - Vespers at the [Altar of the Chair](#) followed by Mass

17:45 - [Altar of the Chair](#)

**Sacrament of Penance** ([right transept](#))

Approach the attendant at the right transept (far right of the papal altar) and indicate that you want to enter for confession. The attendant can direct you toward the language of your choice, which is indicated on the wooden confessionals.

**Daily**

7:00 to 12:30 and Apr-Sep 16:00 to 18:00; Nov-Mar 15:00 to 18:00

**Sunday**

7:00 to 13:00 and Apr-Sep 16:00 to 18:00; Nov-Mar 15:00 to 18:00

**Papal Event Tickets**

The easiest way to get tickets just days before the Wednesday General Audience with the Holy Father is to go to St. Peter's Square, find the Bronze Doors to the Apostolic Palace, and request them from the Swiss Guards. If you want tickets far in advance, have a large group, or require Papal Mass Tickets, try one of the following resources. Note: Christmas and Easter Papal Mass tickets are difficult to obtain.

[US Visitors Office to the Vatican](#), Via dell' Umiltà 30, 00187 Rome, Italy

Phone: (011) 06.6900.1821 Fax: (011) 39 06 679 1448 Email: [nacvisoffrome@pnac.org](mailto:nacvisoffrome@pnac.org)

[Bishops' Office Papal Calendar](#)

[Santa Susanna](#), the American Church in Rome, has an excellent website that allows you to request tickets online.

Letters to the Vatican should be addressed to: Archbishop James Harvey, Prefect of the Pontifical Household, Vatican City 00120. Ph: (011) 39 06 6988 4857; Fax: (011) 39 06 6988 5863

When the Pope is at his summer residence (July and August), the General Audience is held in the Courtyard in the town of Castelgandolfo. He leads the prayer from his study window. Tickets are not required for this event, but at Castelgandolfo (16 miles out of Rome) space is very limited.

[Vatican Calendar of Papal Celebrations](#)

**Dress Code**

The Dress Code is strictly enforced at St. Peter's Basilica. No shorts, bare shoulders or miniskirts. This applies to both men and women. Even if you get through security, you will be turned away by the attendants at the door. On a hot summer day, I've seen dozens of men in shorts turned away.

**Vatican Post Office**

This is a great place to send a send a post card home, or collect stamps. There are two Post Office locations in St. Peter's Square, along the [Charlemagne Wing](#) (left side) and just beyond the colonnades on the right side. Items must have Vatican postage and be mailed from the Vatican. There is also a Post Office in the Vatican Museum

### **Climbing the Cupola**

Hours 8:00 - 18:00 (Apr - Sep) 8:00 - 16:45 (Oct - Mar)

Cost 7 Euros for elevator, 6 Euros for stairs

At the entrance to the basilica, there is a sign that directs you to the far right of the portico (past the Holy Door) and to the kiosk for the elevator. This area can sometimes be entered from the stairs in the baggage check room at the lower right of the basilica.

If you're with someone who doesn't want to climb the 320 steps to the top of the dome, they can still take the elevator to the roof, enjoy the view from the gallery inside the dome looking down into the basilica, and then hang out at the gift shop and coffee bar, while the others make the climb. If you're overly energetic, you can take the stairs that winds around the elevator to reach the roof.

As you exit the interior gallery at the base of the dome, you have the option of going up the dome or down to the roof level. If you make the climb, you'll pass several small windows that provide a view. At the top you receive the views so often seen in photographs. See if you can spot Rome's other great dome, the Pantheon.

Back on the roof, you have access to restrooms, water fountains, a gift shop and a new coffee bar. Take a walk to the front of the basilica to look into the Square and observe the huge statues on the facade. When you're ready to depart, there is again the option of elevator or stairs. Along the walls of the stairs are inscriptions listing some famous people who visited St. Peter's Basilica.

The cost to take the elevator to the roof is 7 euros. It is 6 euros to walk up the stairs around the elevator. I highly recommend the elevator, as there is nothing to see along the stairs, and it's a strenuous walk.

But at the other exit elevator, consider taking the stairs down, as this area contains marble plaques of all the famous who have visited the dome over the years.

### **Grottoes ([Map](#))**

The Vatican Grottoes is the level below the floor of St. Peter's where many popes and a few royals are buried. Below the Grottoes is the ancient Necropolis (seen on the Scavi tour), which is the Roman "city of the dead" and excavations of St. Peter's tomb.

The Grottoes used to be accessed by stairs from either the [St. Longinus](#) or [St. Andrew](#) statues near the papal altar. The normal exit was to the right (north) external side of St. Peter's, near the elevator kiosk for the roof. This area is now the normal entrance, with the exit to the south of the basilica.

One of the highlights of the visit is the view into the [confessio](#), the area in front of St. Peter's tomb. The Niche of the Pallium, with the bronze urn containing the woolen stolls given to new Archbishops, is often mistakenly thought to hold the bones of St. Peter.

### **Information Office**

The Information Office is on the left (south) side wing of St. Peter's, often called the [Charlemagne Wing](#). This area is accessed by several doors and has a Post Office on the far (west) end and the [information desk](#) on the near (east) end. This is a good spot to ask about the free tours of St. Peter's and to exchange money.

### **Restrooms**

There are three main restroom areas. Along the Charlemagne Wing (left side), beyond the colonnades on the upper right side, and in the bag check area on the lower right side of the facade of the basilica. The bag check area has the newest restrooms and from here you can rent the audio tour of the Basilica.

### Weddings at St. Peter's

It is possible to get married in the [Chapel of the Choir](#) at St. Peter's Basilica. The [website for Santa Susanna](#), the American Church in Rome, has detailed information on the process.

See also: [Weddings-in-Italy](#) by Regency.

### Scavi Tour (St. Peter's Tomb)

This 90 min. tour into the Excavations of the Necropolis (City of the Dead) underneath St. Peter's, is one of the most interesting in all of Rome, but you must book well in advance. Start by going to the [Vatican Website](#). The Excavations Office email is: [scavi@fsp.va](mailto:scavi@fsp.va)  
Fax (011) 39 06 6987 3017

You'll need to email the Excavations Office the number of visitors, names, language, contact info in Rome, and time period desired. Try to be flexible on the dates and times. Groups are limited to apx. 15, and no children under 11 are allowed. See: [Sample Reply from Scavi Office](#)

The office is on the left (south) side of the basilica, through the Arch of the Bells. Just walk up to the Swiss Guards with reservation in hand and say Scavi.

Information on the Necropolis is found in Margherita Guarducci's book "[The Tomb of St. Peter](#)"

### Seeing the Pope

On Sundays at noon, the pope usually (if he's in town) appears at the second window from the right of the Apostolic Palace, to pray the Angelus and bless the crowd in the Square. Benedict XVI has continued this tradition, no ticket required.

Otherwise, you can attend the Wednesday General Audience held in St Peter's Square. In winter the audience is held in the Paul VI Hall accessed just to the left of the Square. Tickets are required for the Audience, but are easily obtained. See [Papal Event Tickets](#)

When the Pope is at his summer residence (July and August), the General Audience is held in the Courtyard in the town of Castelgandolfo. He leads the prayer from his study window. Tickets are not required for this event, but at Castelgandolfo (16 miles out of Rome) space is very limited.

The Bishops' Office for U.S. Visitors to the Vatican maintains a Papal Event Schedule at: [http://www.pnac.org/general/visitors\\_office/papaleventscalendar.htm](http://www.pnac.org/general/visitors_office/papaleventscalendar.htm)

### Sistine Chapel

People still come to St Peter's Square and ask how to get to the Sistine Chapel. This is the wrong entrance. The Sistine Chapel is part of the Vatican Museums and that entrance is a 10-15 min. walk along the Vatican Wall from the Square. (See: [Getting to the Vatican Museum](#)). You can however, from the Square, see the roof of the [Sistine Chapel](#) that emits the famous black or white smoke during the papal elections. It's the angled roof just to the right of the basilica, but the stove pipe is removed after the conclave.

### Tomb of John Paul II

The [tomb of John Paul II](#) is in the grottoes below the floor of the Basilica. (See: [Grottoes Map](#)) This spot was previously occupied by the tomb of John XXIII, who's [body](#) was moved up into the basilica. When the grottoes were reopened after the burial of John Paul II, the normal exit to the exterior right (north) of the basilica became the entrance to accommodate the large crowds.

### Tours

There are many ways to obtain a tour of St Peter's Basilica. The simplest way may be to print out Fr. Carolan's [one page walking tour](#), and do it yourself. The bag check area to the right of the basilica entrance, now rents an audio walking tour which is very good. Check at the [Information Desk](#) near the Post Office on the [left of the basilica](#) for the free guided tour schedule. These one hour tours are conducted by seminarians from the N.A.C. or the English Guides to St. Peter's, and depart around 2:15PM. Finally, many tour companies in Rome offer free tours of the basilica, some of which meet

around 10:00AM at the obelisk. After the free tour, these guides will invite you to their pay tour of the Vatican Museum.

#### **Schedule a Special Mass**

If you have a priest in your group and want to schedule a special mass at the Clementine Chapel near St. Peter's tomb, contact Dottore Antonio Grimaldi.

Fax: (011) 39 06 698 855 18

Tel: (011) 39 06 698 81496

The Clementine Chapel is located on the grottoes level below the basilica.  
Space is limited in this small chapel. (apx. 12 persons)

If you would like to get married at St. Peter's Basilica, see the following website:

<http://www.santasusanna.org/weddingsRome/stPeters.html>

The Vatican does NOT accept mass stipends for masses to be said at St. Peter's Basilica.

This independent website is not endorsed by or associated with the Vatican, the Fabbrica of St. Peter's, or any business organization

Contact: [stpetersbasilica@gmail.com](mailto:stpetersbasilica@gmail.com)